TEXT FLY WITHIN THE BOOK ONLY

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OU_210120

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No. 891/T94L Accession No. 10922

Author Turner. W.J.

Title Landscape of Cytherea 19

This book should be returned on or before the date last marked below.

Now, like small jewels, men's bodies in earth's stone
Flushed with her fire shall, darkly ploughing, feel
Through purple rocks, waves of their misery,
Bright Cytherea's Sun on tranquil keel.

Landscape of Cytherea

Record of a Journey into a Strange Country

By

W. J. Turner

London
Chatto & Windus
1923

PRINTED IN ENGLAND AT
THE WESTMINSTER PRESS
LONDON, W.

ALL RIGHTS
RESERVED

Contents

	PAGE
Overture	7
Journey to Cytherea	9
Incident Before Arrival	11
He Enters the Landscape	12
Unheard Voices Accompany Him	13
The Land	14
The Days and Nights	15
Ideal	16
Real	17
Apparition	18
Vision	19
Rhapsody	20
Secrecy of Beauty	22
He Contemplates His Discovery	23
He Addresses Her	24
He Meditates on Her Beauty	25
He Sees Her Ghost	27
Imagination	28
He Compares Her With Other Women	30
She is the Same?	31
Scroll of Cytherea	32
Sunset	33
False Dawn	34
Pause	35
Song	36
Departure of the Body	37

Contents

	PAGE
Passion and Melancholy	38
Contemplation of Life	39
He Asks a Question	41
He Looks Back	43
Mystery	44
Fading Coast of Cytherea	46
Return from Cytherea	47
Conclusion	49

OVERTURE

CRAWLING in twilight seas with head and eyes
As yet cauled over in dim-stirring mud,
How did I sense the faintly waving leaves
The thin and delicate motions of the wind?
How did I gather, like a Summer cloud,
In the dark slime, empty of shape as air,
And move up slowly towards the Sun and Moon
Which burned unknown within the unknown sky?

There came a day, a Day. I had no eyes
When first I gazed upon that patch of light,
The Day became my eyes and saw itself;
The Moon, the Sun, and slowly all the stars
Beheld themselves; and the dark purple Night
Grew black as I grew still, and did not move.
I, who once crawled in an eternal dream
Of edgeless shade, blinked at the dark and bright.

How long I crawled upon that bank of land
While crawled the Sun and Moon through my dim lens—
That feeble sparkle in the shoal of Time;
Ere the Trees waved and Flowers white and blue
Detached their swaying beauty from the wind
And ere amid the flux of light and shade
I Shadows saw who changed not as they moved,
But moved, and stood, and moved again, and *gazed!*

How long before I sought among those Shades
Some future marvel that I cannot name
Except I say : " Behold 'tis this strange Queen ! "
But looking at you there is none can see
That Image of the Ghost which I perceive.
Once, *I* could not perceive the Sun and Moon
Cut out from space, and now men do not know
How you are different from the wives of men.

Ghost ! Image ! Soul ! To you I slowly move
Through the dim hilly tapestry of Time ;
Footprints about me everywhere I see
But you I see not ; yet all Future's here,
It hangs before me as those unseen Lamps
Hung in the sky unknown, unguessed, above
The billows of the cold perpetual sea
Whose fading foam-rings left no memory.

JOURNEY TO CYTHEREA

SIX thousand miles across the sea this I
Came on a boat of iron beneath the stars.
Daily with other shades This walked the deck;
Shadows beneath swam in the transparent sea,
Around the mast-tops circling shadows flew;
Huge clouds blew into shreds across the sky
And, as we walked, the Sun fell in the waves
A ball of squirming serpents, terrific red.
Instantly on the deck leapt boneless Night,
The shuddering ship's masts cracked the sky to glass—
A desert of shining diamonds. Softly up and down
With noiseless tread an ape-like shadow went
And bubbling from that shadow came this cry:
Lonely, lonely, lonely, lonely am I!

Into a flat and desolate place we steamed:
Huge cranes thrust giant arms against the sky,
And we climbed down, and rolled away in trains
Whose fleecy curls dissolved on the green hills.
Small streams and trees and cabins we saw afloat
On the green earth, whose crests and hollows slow
Seemed like still billows: their plunge so gradual
That all these shallow eyes shall fill with dust,
And not perceive them change! The rumbling noise
Jarred through our limbs which sprawled about the seats,
Whereon our eyeballs, rolling vacantly,
Took the bright image of a spire or cloud.
And from those eyeballed shadows came a cry:
Lonely, lonely, lonely, lonely am I!

Then many years I wandered up and down
The streets of cities. I saw the sunball's flames
In the white circled faces. Wrapped in dark clothes
They hurried past me. In their eyes I saw
No one I knew, we passed unrecognised—
The cities spirochetes gyrating fast,
Dead, spinning multitudinous vortices
Upon the pavements, whorls of human dust,
The spirit nebulae of stranger systems
Than those vast populations of the skies!
And as we walked in metamorphosis
To fresh vibrations of the invisible whirlwind,
A voice among those shadows lifted its cry:
Lonely, lonely, lonely, lonely am I!

At last within four walls I looked on you,
Upon your head a great black spirit writhed,
And through your eyes down infinite gulfs I gazed,
And saw you not. Your hollow laugh rang out
Loudly amid a herd of human grins;
In haggard circles sorrow bound your eyes
And some pale Faun broke into your brief smile
With one bright gaze, and vanished. I saw you not.
I saw you not! I saw a trembling flame,
A pallid luminous shadow with white hands,
And I, discrete as lightning, bodiless,
Could reach you not, nor touch, nor speak to you.
Then trumpetless blasted my soul this cry:
Lonely, lonely, lonely, lonely am I!

INCIDENT BEFORE ARRIVAL

I MET a whore, walking in Piccadilly ;
I walked behind. She was so beautiful
And so contemptuous of all who wished to buy
I nearly stopped and asked her to come with me.
But then I thought, what do I want ? Her beauty ?
It's inaccessible, put beyond reach,
Not as the beauty of child-bearing women
Who suffer to bequeath their loveliness
And the imagination of their lover !
This thought so checked my radiant desire
That all the buildings trembled in the street
As she went by. The clouds clashed in the air
And the Sun darkened. *Beautiful as a storm*
She went her way.

HE ENTERS THE LANDSCAPE

ETERNITY awaits upon that gliding river,
Hangs low the Moon;
There is a Sail, a hollow of white marble in the Wind,
Its billow like the small curve of the Moon
That looks coldly upon my heart.

The willows upon the bank quiver—
A long ripple of leaves without a sound.
There is a light upon your face that falls more gently than the rays of the stars,
It is the light of my eyes.

UNHEARD VOICES ACCOMPANY HIM

"THROUGH the dim tapestry
Of the Sea,
Hill, Mountain,
The Melancholy of Fountain
Droops its grey plumes;
The languor of moonlight
Softly blooms.

There the sea's soft shallows upcurled
Are not heard,
The Voices that call are Voices
Symbolical.
Frost sleeps on the waves' soft billow,
And the Shadow of surf
Shall not fall."

THE LAND

IS this the country of immortal love,
This planet of green fields and foaming seas,
This dark Companion of a dying Sun
Among the ranks of Heaven's bright companies?

Myself unknown dark Image by earth's sea—
As round that glittering star, the Sun, we roll—
Here stand obscure and yet the Form of all,
Mirror of that Commander of the Soul

Whose voice I lift among these rocks and hills,
Whose hand I raise within this crumpled scene,
And cliff and gorge are worn away by rain,
But still survives the sense that He has been

In lightning flickering on the night's dark wave,
In marble limb of moonlit surf and cloud,
In cadence of the countless raying stars,
Falling like leaves, a solitudining shroud

Where one by one vast globes dissolve away,
Leaving within that still, that emptied scene
Me, the Enchanter, ever in broken outline,
Fragment of all, that One Great Form has been.

THE DAYS AND NIGHTS

THE *Days* and *Nights* are black and marble Djinn
Who pass continually in single file,
Enormous giants treading dawn's rocky glen,
Noiselessly, like a Mute's wandering smile.

Wide-eyed their countenances, calmly full
Of myriad hills, and flowery meadow-lights,
Dark nimbus clouds, crimson and mackerel,
Barred with soft gold the *Days*, with silver, *Nights*.

Bloom of the morn and evening snow, their brows;
Dark flapping thought the eagle that forsakes
Unconsciousness—the sky through which it ploughs.
Their hairs are hurricanes, their smiles are lakes.

Procession strange, storm-calm perpetual,
White fleece and purple grape of equinox;
Eternal love divided thus to dwell
Billows of shining snow amid black rocks.

IDEAL

" An Angel, face and wings of air "

IN some sea-ruffled wood,
Or wilderness,
There sits—of braided hair
Her simple dress—
This Nymph, this Bubble, this bright Spectre, Air !

This Wave of Light in Amber,
This lovely Streak
From some sub-oceanic crack arisen
When mermen speak
Not—but, in their minds leaning, twang the Harp of Vision !

Gazing within
Her chamber bright,
They see this angel of unsullied joy
So jewelled in light
No dark Wind can her ivory calm destroy.

This lovely toy
Undimmed with years,
Dark-diamonded from any wind of grief,
Washed by their tears,
Below storms sunken like a coral reef,

Into the world
Will gradually emerge ;
All hurricanes of grief shall fade away,
And on its verge
Stand the bright blue and sempiternal Day !

REAL

HARK ! there is silence here,
There is the stillness of the spinning stars ;
Look at the revolution of their bodies
In the dark blue sky !

The marble face I have dug up,
Lovely and small,
Is a memory of Aphrodite
Buried in this calm.

Aphrodite I named her,
I see the dark-haired crowds under a Tree
Watching the crocus breaking in the Springtime
Like a green wave.

Now only Trees in crowds
Hang black around me,
Like dirt on this marble bloom
I have dug up.

APPARITION

DARK chaos budding in a small bright face
Burst like the sea's foam border narrow and small,
A waving branch of Holy Ghost so lit
Amid the dense life-foliage that all
But it in sense's night are plumes funereal.
There was in me a universal wit
To love all women and propagate their merit.
Some moved me but as man-in-general;
Others there were who had peculiar grace
And each a chamber of my sense inhabits.
But since I loved you I no more unravel
Darkness from light, for you do both entangle,
Transparent night and opaque milk-white dawn.
Evening your hair, and *Morning* your twined arms
Whose small white hands now at this break of day
On sea and sky turn their pale luminous palms.

VISION

FROM the dark meadow of her dress
outcropped white face and hands,
the virgin scattered dreamfulness
of chalk in grassy lands.

In those shut eyes the Spirit lay
entombed, like a dead King
whose coffin is the dream-bright day,
whose voice a river singing,

singing far far underground,
the unrippled landscape over,
where dream-bones of all mortal souls
hang by Babylon's river.

By that unsounding stream I hung
my harp, my harp of gold,
and through the stillness wave on wave
of crystal Sorrow rolled.

The Trees in their deep golden hair
drooping, in amber closed,
were showers of Silence in the air
whose soul far, far, reposed

in milk-white hands, in dreamful face,
while the green grasses of her dress
went rippling with her limbs' sweet grace
singing her secret loveliness.

RHAPSODY

SHE whom I love is as fine air
Through which mountain eagles stare
And see within earth's crystal streams
Slower-flitting, grosser beams.
For She's unknown to every sense
That finds on earth its recompense,
The eye that can her beauty see
Fastens some copy, 'tis not She;
And when my hand touches her hand
I feel Columbus touching land
And lose for a small lovely scene
Some great unknown Atlantis Queen.
Is there on earth no mortal show
Of music if a Wind blow?
Or when in calm the wind stills
Lies music's garment on the hills,
Dropped ermine of her virgin snow?
Is there no skeleton of breeze
Save that faint rattle in the trees?
Gaze, and we'll hear how Silence dins
In old smooth-bellied violins,
See Sound in curve imprisoned fast,
The Wind tied fluttering to the mast,
Dark Feet after Lightning drag,
Love's withering flash blast on the stag
Dead Antlers and, a glittering cast
Of smooth and shining memory,
Bury the skeleton's ivory:
Believe each dark beast's glazing eye
A fading boundary of the sky,
That in each prowling Face walks Light

And in every carcase Night!
Whose Shadow is she? I adore
Her beauty, yet I long for more.
I would gaze into pure light
Divested of its body Night;
Yet I would not lose her hair,
Her black, soulless, lovely hair;
Yet I would not lose her hands,
They are Jerusalem's sweet lands;
Yet I would not lose her voice,
It is the Son of God's: "Rejoice
That all your sins are now forgiven,"
And in it sound the choirs of heaven;
Yet I would not lose her mouth,
'Tis a wave breaking from the South
Over a stilly crystal scene,
The living Flag of the unseen;
Yet I would not lose her eyes,
Since what's immortal in them lies,
They are that small, that spiritual sea
Amid dead matter, drowning me.
Awake, my body! In the Sun
Of her earth-bound attraction run:
These are the famed Elysian lands
Whose lilies are her peaceful hands!

SECRECY OF BEAUTY

I HAVE seen faces haloed in dark fur
Or frilled with the soft white nimbus of the fox,
And as the hunter underneath hard rocks
In shadowed snow finds the unblemished spoor,

Contemplative—*the vision in his mind*
Walking untouched through the unconscious woods—
So, when I look on these small fragile signs
Of loveliness in peopled solitudes,

Those visages become a flowery grove,
Where walks with curls, than foam more fleecy white,
That crystal Quarry, whose eyes of sourceless light
Are bubbles of earth's melancholy love.

HE CONTEMPLATES HIS DISCOVERY

ARE you a diamond or a ruby stone
My eyes have lighted on;
And without eyes should I your face unknown
Pass by,
Or would some other sense's alchemy
Arrest my soul? Your footfall or some tone
Within the air that seeing-men would call
Vainly? Alas, I fear there is no sense alone
Could find you out, though you are physical
To touch, and to more subtle ear and eye.
Yet when the Sun across the hills has gone,
It never moved though the bright day is done.
So you remain although my senses die
Leaving blank night within my outstretched sky.

Though eye and ear and my combining soul
Bring me a spiritual angel from earth's stone
Whose lips I press and by your sweet name call,
Only in imagination her I own.
For she is you, and you are dark and tall,
The Pine sprung from the rock, she the Unknown
That presses all its boughs against the wind
And is not from earth's promontory blown
Into the gulf of ether mystical
But is as salt sharp pungent to the mind.
So you are one,
And that black wind your hair 'tis you and she
Met in air's glass. O wild felicity,
Sunk in my soul I have you there alone!

HE ADDRESSES HER

WHEN I have kissed you and have looked on you
Then I may speak, but like a stream I'll babble
That winds about a beauteous silent country
Yet does not tell of calm dream-lovely mountains,
Rain-sculptured rocks, snow-clouds and drooping trees
That hang their images in that pure essence :
So shall speech tell not my imagination
In which you lie so inexpressible,
So exquisite intangible a glory
That words move like a breath upon still water
Darkening the mirror where your light is shining.
Therefore, when you are listening to that babble,
Gaze into my eternal voiceless spirit
Where we embrace and are forever one !

HE MEDITATES ON HER BEAUTY

SHALL we be nearer when we have done all
That men and women can to incarnate
That love which is an infinite crystal wave
Clouding to human bodies as clear water
Foams on the beach of earth, or piles ice-mountains
To flash bright shapes into the dazzling Sun ?
Why should your hands and feet and slim white body—
That slip of marble where the black rippling water
Pours headlong down—awake my heart to fury ?
If in my hand I take your waving tresses
I am no nearer to that anguished vision
Nor can my arms find that mysterious you
Nor do our bodies in their marvellous mixing
Lose their strange isolation. Yet on a journey faring
They have gone forth, and presently incarnate
With limbs like ours our strange and lovely offspring
Whom we know not by Moon and Sun casts shadow.

It is the childhood of an old desire
And that was but a shadow from the Moon
Thrown upon your cold beauty. Who are *you*
My secret one ? I do not love your beauty,
And long ago I have consumed my lust !
But *you*, who are not that pale slip of marble,
Or that black rippling river that ploughs my soul,
Where do you hide, for I have come to kiss you ?
Kiss ! . . . is it not but more desperately to lose you ?
Yet that which was your father and your mother
I did not love, and those shapes of the future
In whose strange voices yours will sometimes ring,
Can I love them ? O no, I cannot love them,
For I love you, and yet I cannot find you :

You are one summer day migrations past
Lost in the multitude of summer days—
There was a small black torrent in the wind
That moaned into my heart : there was a sky
Compact of light and fragrance such as never
Earth reassembled !
Earth in memory sunk
Is but a faint and transitory impression,
Its lines fade out, and how shall you remain
In the Four Great Dimensions ? O my love,
My dear, sweet love, so small, so tangible,
Smile up into the darkness of the sky
It will perhaps remember.

A Shadow
Falls in a deep wood. On some far meadow
A Sun sinks slowly. In transparent gold
No leaf stirs, waves no tree-top ; cold
In that pale honey pouring from the comb
Love's body whitens to an opaque tomb.
Darkness of rock and tree surge billowing higher,
Out of the mountains sticks a small white Moon,
The rib of some enormous shrunk Desire !

HE SEES HER GHOST

UPON my bed your spectre I embraced,
And I did faint with lust,
And flung my arms about your boneless ghost;
There rose a faint thin dust:
Suddenly still upon the sheets I lay,
That dry perfume to which all lovers waste
Within my nostrils would not fade away.
"Depart, O harlot, I would taste love's Host,
Her own sweet body, not this common rust
To which all lovers in their graves decay!"
None answered me; though dark I could descry
A fading swirl whose scattered atoms lost
The ball of my cold eye.

And then I thought: came you into this room
Upon this ball you'd but a shadow be,
And I should watch your shadow lie with mine,
Shadows occulting in bright ecstasy:
Again emerged two shadows, I and You
And once more separate in the hollow gloom
What is that strange fond gazing that we do?
Is't not remembrance? To blood is it not wine?
As of life's kiss we are twin memory
So do I think Imaginations woo,
And Shade seeks trembling Shade—
Blown from that Fire, whose smoking dust made sign
It would my bed invade.

IMAGINATION

I HAVE admired the bright smooth limbs of children
And loved to touch their cool firm marble flesh
When they harmoniously were beautiful
With rare proportions like a Mozart air.
Such strange perfection has been ne'er begot
As I do dream of; yet I had not seen
On earth that image of sweet air and fire
Which bears your name carved by the tears of care.
But now from earthly dross my love has worn
The absolute You, my son, whom *you* have torn
Out of your soul, and it is my desire.

Milking your love this Michelangelo
Whose rounded limbs your lovelier arms adore
Is but a marble fragment of Apollo
Cast on the beach of that transparent sea
Whose breakers are our lovely coral bodies,
Its music tinting in a thousand hues
On lovers' faces turned to one another
To hearken to that still, enchanted ocean
Whose tides are singing as they slowly follow
Their Moon, their Sun, you and your golden Brother—
Twin glittering shadows of the eternal one.

Not all our beauty is in this our son
For when I gaze on his snow-shadowed mother
Her paler bosom like a wave of the sea
Leaves in the fading air a cadenced fall
Of silver petals on a moon-bathed isle
Where the foam rolls in clouds of surfing pearl.

On that calm scene life breaks mysteriously
Its clear invisible gigantic billow.
Her lovely hands out of the breakers curl,
And a sweet secret beach grows clear and shallow
With the frail tranquil beauty of her smile.

HE COMPARES HER WITH OTHER WOMEN

I HAVE loved women's clothes, hair, hands or feet:
" Loved " !—rather have I passionately desired
Those objects for their beautiful perfection
Small as a cloud, a marble froth of wind
In summer air ! To such my brain has poured
And known a keen dissolving ecstasy.
But *you* my body has not thus adored,
And seeing you I saw not with these eyes.
Nor have I heard what music earthward fell
When you have spoken. Nor have I ever known
To whom I spake. I thought it was some Spirit
Which did lifelong my hidden soul inhabit
And was come forth a while to breathe and gaze—
So intimate you were, and yet so strange !

Did you like symmetry of thought inherit ?

You would not answer. Only in my mind
Loosed your black hair whose cataract did fall
In imitation of those small cascades
Dotting the far green memory of a boy
Wandering amid forests perpetual
In youth gone by, where foliage only fades
But never drops and leaves a naked wind
Among the trees. There did I often call,
And you replied not, hearing in secret joy
My infant love. Now you have arms and limbs
And are estranged ; you have a woman's form
And though with my own soul at me you smile
Twin planets locked apart we subtly wind
Through the arcana of eternal mind. . . .

O look on me, and my sad heart beguile !

SHE IS THE SAME?

AND did you dream you ever loved before?
Confess, it was not so.
For this is madness dark and veritable
Like the black cloud which bursts from your white brow!
Another cloud I know
Whose ebon undergrowth lies on such snow
As never mantled earth. This cloak of sable
When I did seize your lips did part and smile
So rich and faintly and your eyes adore:
A thousand hairs did Cyprian odours blow,
And Venus rose from her dark tangled isle,
And with the milk of love your breasts did swell.

Long I lay deep in that enchanted realm:
Closed were those jewels
Which were your eyes, but I had sunk in them.
Together clasped in ruby calm we lay,
So dark and cruel,
Our black-browed bodies scrolled for a tyrant's gem
By Love who had entwined there Night and Day
Struggling with onyx limbs! In that bright calm
(Our dark heads on their snowy trunks asleep,
The tide of love now sunken from earth's rim)
Silent and still hung on the crystal foam
Her shell of pearl with Venus at the helm.

SCROLL OF CYTHEREA

HERE are the stars and winds confederate
In some dark scroll never to be revealed,
And here the Sun like man's encircled mind
Blots it with light, a round obscuring shield.
Yet there are fountains of that light, unseen,
Whose gushing sources are both dark and blind,
And she who stands before me, that bright Queen
Whose fairness dazzles, is a burning spate
Of the immortal dark which flows behind.
Thus taking weight
And light and heat, and in Form's boundaries sealed,
She is locked up; and I shall never find
The billowing flood beneath that flowery field,
But all I have is all that I have seen,
This is my whole estate.

Shall I be thus content? Some men have less,
Who have not eyes, nor ears, nor that quick sense
Which lives incontinent, and would forth leap
Into a world whose clouds and hills immense
Are scarce discoverable, since they do change
So slowly that sense falls into a sleep.
Then *Naked Souls* are cloud and mountain range,
And earth's dim cliffs imagination's dress
Where Sun and Moon, *Shapes Melancholy*, weep.
That wilderness
Shall I not haunt with sickle and look intense,
Searching some harvest on those hills to reap
In the still ruby light! Shall I come thence
With some dark corn, than She more sweet and strange,
Given for her lost caress?

SUNSET

IN my imagination you have died
Like the Sun's shadow,
Which creeping slowly spread soft purple doom
Meadow to meadow.
The Sun, that Fire, removed beyond Life's mountain
In vain your hair sweeps with funereal tide
To darken my soul's gullies
Strewn with wild lava-thought congealed in gloom
That pours and eddies
From me, a solitary black bubbling Fountain.

It is so calm and still here since you died.
No sound or motion
Save my soul's drooping plumage in this grove—
Black gull from Evening's ocean
On Sleep's dark billow hung with folded wing:
So deep, so still a tide
That if your Face upon these shadows shone,
Moon of that Fiery Love
Which long ago behind Life's hill has gone,
Profounder Death would from these dead rocks spring

And on your silver Brow gaze till you died.
O hollow! wasted! wan!
Among what icy mountains journeying
Shall Death, his office done,
In frost's cascade, or in some shining billow
Hung by the still sea's side
Upon his Shadow leap—
That Fountain then begin soft murmuring
And the black Gull with floating wings asleep
Ruffle its plumy pillow!

FALSE DAWN

I SAID you died, but only as the Sun
Which will arise again more beautiful
Than it expired ; so has your spirit done
(Coiled in your hair, black smooth and serpentine)
Out of its window gazing from your stool
On hills and gullies—all that undulation,
That dreamland map of stiff earth-framed design
Where dripping from the moon the pale sea flows
As flow your limbs through your stiff frame of clothes.
So risen again
From me you draw this twisted harvest, pain.

But you are cold, wreathed in your black coiled hair,
And like your white gaze is your harvest white—
Bright icicles from realms of frosty air !
Yet in your arctic eyes soft ice winds blow
An ember of a far returning light.
A frail green fire starts from my dead despair,
Spring water reddens through my heart's black snow.
In a dim scene hung between Moon and Sun
On glassy mirrors in frost's slumber spun,
By many a pool
Rises your Dream-Shape from its winter stool.

PAUSE

A THOUSAND subtleties were in my brain,
As many as the wrinkles of the tide
That flowed beyond earth's window, or the leaves
Shuttering the light that streamed ethereal rain
On tree and river. Watching your thin hands glide
Over your needles and under dark bound sheaves
Your eyelids flicker lightning from still clouds
Noiseless in summer weather I saw the stain
Of human form, of flowing stream and tree
Slowly dissolve into a myriad thrummings
On soft guitars from dense electric crowds—
The small bright twanging strings of joy and pain!
And I, slowly emerging from this medley strumming,
Lifted a harp, beginning:

O Grief,
O Misery!

SONG

FORTUNATE are the feet of the swallow
Folded unseen past the mountain
Unmirrored in water where the willow
Undulates its wavering fountain ;
In secret they sleep together
Bound by a dream in their slumber
Dream of a sailing feather
Whom only soft winds encumber.
Would you and I were thus lying
Side by side on love's pillow,
Our heart-beats the wings of love flying,
Migrating from Time's dark billow.

DEPARTURE OF THE BODY

ONE bright and sunny morning late in June
I had a letter from a dying friend,
Not dying in the sense her skeleton
Had like a vine in Autumn shed its leaves,
But dying as the bird that down a valley
Vanishes with its song. Thus passed away,
She left me, my immortal, dear beloved.
And I sat still, thinking of many years
That were to pass and knowing without joy
She would return and how we should delight
In our sweet love—yet nothing comforted.
For I was full of that old misery
Whose voice is the child crying in its cradle,
And the white beaten border of the sea—
That creeping cur of hopes in strangulation!
Still I sat there, and knew not what to do.
All noises in the street had died away,
The room was still, my books lay all around.
Then like a hieroglyph across the wall
Far-off, a horse-drawn milk-cart clattered by;
I heard the empty cans, saw the white stream
Gushing its life into a myriad babes
And, like the Egyptian river, circling earth.
Despair ran in my soul. Another river
Black as the first was white came streaming forth,
It was Myself, and, inexhaustible,
I gushed out darkness like a ribbon of death
Winding among the bright-faced generations.

PASSION AND MELANCHOLY

PASSION and Melancholy these twin flowers
Upon the cliff of earthly memory bloom ;
Blood poppy Sun and white camellia Moon
They hang, and dark unconsciousness perfume.

Beneath that cliff its tides do waste around
Horizonless, sable of dusky sails,
Wave-tintings in continuous timbre of sound,
The wails of spirit seamen when the wind wails.

From what immortal root do they upspring,
What is the name or substance of that wood
In whose invisible air together cling
Snow crocus body and dark poppy blood ?

CONTEMPLATION OF LIFE

UPON a scene of endless transformation
I gazed unhappy, rivers came and faded
Dragging a momentary brightness from the clouds
Into the monochrome of rolling seas
Which leapt and fell with steady undulation.
And in the crystal of eternity
Hung with a quivering wave-like repetition
Earth's Trees and Mountains and her hollow Valleys,
With Towns and Peoples and a few fearful Places
Where the soul, hunted, had leapt up and printed
On rock, or tree, or sheeted falling water
Its sudden, bright, and diamond-burning Visage.

And as I gazed upon that deathless scene—
Which is and is not—above the flickering desert
I saw a black Flag floating soundlessly :
Ha ! Death ! I thought. But down the silence came
A noise of the cold breaking of Felicity.
O'er boundless snow I saw that waving fragment,
Love's small black Flag, stiff in the crystal globe.
The sky was carved with icy tombs of lovers
Whose Spirits bodiless as running water
Sat sculptured marble in Antarctic cold—
Their frozen beauty in the Spring tide clouding,
Now freed by shattering currents, slowly drifting
Into the open Ocean and there dimming
Among the dimmed and unremembering water
Until bright lovers' faces all were vanished,

And love's black Flag an unseen rippling wind.
Then in that formless never-ending motion
Slowness upon the surface slowly settling
Began to dream ; until the stillness deepening
I gazed once more upon a frozen silence
Filled with those tombs of beauty, Lovers' Faces.
And Love's black Flag was stiff and small above them—
Which seeing, my heart wept distractedly.

HE ASKS A QUESTION

BEHOLD the generations of men
Leaping and falling in their tides
Up and down the face of the earth,
A Landscape without a Moon.

A Moon is over the sea
Whom the rolling waves obey,
But what draws over the sea
This creeping Ship ?

From its sides spreading waves of men
Mount all over the earth,
Climb the crests of the hills,
Crowd the narrow valleys.

Heedless of Moon or Sun,
Against the drift of the stars,
Without any visible seasons
They flood the earth.

What have they then before them ?
What can it be that draws them ?
Beauty as a Moon before them :
They hail the tidal Moon !

That globe of silver, that fragment
Swings slowly over the hills,
The Dream that is on their faces
Sinks again into their hearts.

Whence came the illumination
On that dark body,
And on the waves of the landscape
That Dream ?

HE LOOKS BACK

THIS is the coast whereon I tossed
Unconscious. I did find
No marvel when I looked around
But I, being Love, was blind.

I did not see her where she stood,
But on that tranquil scene
Life yawned me like a seaman up
Drowned where no storm had been.

MYSTERY

In a sea Cytherean
Billows are rolling, rolling, rolling
Over stillness molybdenean
Hung with the scrolling
Abyss-plants whose fingers chaldean
Rock slumber under foam-froth where lumber
Souls pythagorean—
The whales—*rolling slowly, rolling slowly, rolling slowly*—
Billows Cytherean,

In that sea
Rock and Tree,
Plant and Flower are hidden;
The bird flying slowly
Across the sky's canopy,
The Sun that in the wave reddens
Fading from air
Move not, but lie
Still as their sky.

In woman Man waking
Arisen from the womb
Lies down in the tomb,
His flesh as a dream him forsaking—
As a sudden wave,
Tropic calm for its grave,
On the sea's crystal stillness breaking
Leaves a white skeleton
Where it passed on.

That dithyramb of wars,
The burning stars,
And those love-drifts the eyes of the jaguar,
Are but the bright hair
Of risen Cytherea
From her surf-glow of spermatozoa,
When climbing dizzily
The spiral Nebulae
Scatter suns in the sky their bed.

All there are but motion,
Ether's surf ocean;
Dense stillness molybdenean
Is Aphrodite
(Crystal of the sea
That is rolling, rolling, rolling)
Far from this migration
This flow pythagorean,
Life scenes from her essence unscrolling.

FADING COAST OF CYTHEREA

NO hope or help! Beauty in flowers
Hangs over cliff and wall
Moon-breakers fall—
O melancholy fall
Of ghosts on the pale smooth sand!

The hanging Land
Crowded with Trees upblown,
A darkness sown
In sprouting stone
Whence waves her small white hand!

Gone like a sigh! Alone,
On a sea of silk from the Moon
A still, full Moon
Whose white cocoon
Spins in the sky!

RETURN FROM CYTHEREA

OUR bodies lay between. We looked across.
Four window panes I saw, four sheets of light
Upon my coffin, yours and mine, that room
Tattooed with scenes Chinese. Worms make such scrawls
And these the spiritual worm had drawn,
When, leaving men's brains, out upon the paper
It crawled and puffed itself—huge quilted Forms
On their small pointed feet, their worm-like ends.
Flashing through space then earth's returning river
Like a bright frozen cry lay on the air.
Trees gaped up voiceless. Throttled by glass that scene
Lay like a dead flower on an open page.
I heard the surfing air retreating fall,
I turned : the Day was clear, had there been noise of bells
To welcome me on earth I could have heard
Each one sway like a ghost hanged up in air,
But there was not a sound—Transparent Glass
On which I breathed my earth-bound wintry soul !

I saw small puffs of smoke rise from the train
That ran about, under the hills, through valleys.
I saw the smoking chimneys, cities of men
Ballooning their dark dreams upon the sky.
I sat within the train, herds of gorillas
Stared silent. All their pale mottled faces
Were turned to me. I saw thy vast creation
O Aphrodite ! and I heard the fall
And thunder of thy surf. I caught the gleam
On the pale foaming daylight. All earth's trees
Like the green glass of frail transparent beakers
Blown by Venetians to a froth for wine

Held that rare insubstantial airy lightness
For me to quaff. I drained it unto thee
And thought I drank all thy gold crisping curls,
But through my feet ran the chill pallor of thy icy waves.

Dead is the sky, black are the limbs of trees
Upon the sparkling night. Farewell, farewell!
Look not for me again upon this reef.
I push my bark off into starry seas
Too still, transparent and unfathomable
For foam of thy white arms.

Farewell!

Farewell!

CONCLUSION

RUSTLING with colour was this planet Earth
Long, long, ago, and drenched with atmosphere;
And blades of swords encrusted with soft rains
Sank among corn, like lightning rusting there.

In crimson furrows lay the bright steel plough—
Rough, dark-red seas stiff by flat fields of green;
Bright emerald trees, airy and diamond-clear
And trees like coloured rains the hills between!

Blue cliffs from seas of silk, mysterious, far,
Rose up at dawn before the mariner
Whose red or wave-stained sheet with day floats in
Like a dim Moon in summer atmosphere.

Still, saffron roses dazed in the heats of June
Shedding wax light among moon shadows lay,
Forgotten pools under earth's Wanderer
Of that gold-spouting Fountain far away.

Trembling, the fern its spotted shadow shook
With spray of trickling silver buried in gloom—
Forests profound sheathing the large-leafed day
That droops and lifts, a dim gigantic bloom!

In that still tomb the slinking jaguar
Dropped its gold-spotted shadow and was gone,
And, on the ground, there lies a pure white flower,
Its coldly shining thin-ribbed skeleton.

The leafless day stiff with the bones of trees,
The still seas' billows of perpetual snow—
These ribs remain of that soft blooming fire
Whose filling wind grew still and did not blow.